



CONTACT: Mike Reilly, Chair, Sonoma County Board of Supervisors
(707) 565-2241
Pam Jeane, Deputy Chief Engineer, SCWA
(707) 521-1864

June 14, 2004
For Immediate Release

Water agency warns of summer water shortages

(Santa Rosa, CA) —Following record water use in April and May, the Sonoma County Water Agency is warning local water retailers, residents and businesses that if the current trend continues, July and August could find them facing shortages and voluntary or mandatory conservation measures.

The water agency delivered an average of 75 million gallons of water each day (mgd) in May, an historic high for that month. The previous high was 68 mgd, set in 2001. In an average May, the water agency would deliver about 55 mgd to its prime contractors, which include the cities of Santa Rosa, Rohnert Park, Petaluma, Cotati and Sonoma, and the Forestville, North Marin and Valley of the Moon water districts. In addition, deliveries for April were 61 mgd, several million gallons a day over the April average of 48 mgd.

“If that trend continues, we are looking at demand peaks in July and August that are simply beyond the capability of our system,” said Mike Reilly, chair of the Sonoma County Board of Supervisors, which also acts as the water agency’s board of directors. The water agency’s

2-2-2

Water agency

transmission system is capable of supplying 84 mgd on a sustained basis.

The marked increase in water use seems to be the result of several factors.

“Not only did businesses and residents use more water during May, but some of the water retailers opted to take more water agency water from the Russian River and not use their local groundwater supplies,” said Pam Jeane, water agency deputy chief engineer.

The cities and water districts have agreements with the water agency which dictate the circumstances under which conservation and other measures would be imposed.

“It’s apparent that we need to immediately implement any tools we have at our disposal to reduce the strain on the transmission system,” said Supervisor Tim Smith, whose 3rd District includes Rohnert Park and most of central Santa Rosa. “This is a systemwide problem and everyone has to work together to solve it.”

Many water retailers have taken steps, mostly in the last five years, to reduce water use through conservation programs, water meters and operational changes, such as encouraging the use of recycled water, where appropriate. A program funded by the water agency has enabled the retailers to distribute more than 100,000 low-flow showerheads and aerators; retrofit 33,000 toilets to low-flow; and issue 1,200 rebates for low-water-use washing machines. Another state-funded program has allowed restaurant and food service businesses in the county to replace almost 400 pre-rinse spray nozzles with low-flow versions.

The impending crisis highlights the need for expanded transmission capability in the system of pipes, pumps, tanks and wells that supply water to 570,000 residents of Sonoma and Marin counties. Sonoma County Water Agency has proposed the Water Supply and Transmission System Project, featuring increased water conservation and Russian River usage, as well as an expanded transmission system, to fill the increasing water needs of the county.

- more -

3-3-3

Water agency

“Although we are working on the Water Supply and Transmission System Project, it is at least 10 to 15 years before we will see any additional capacity in the system,” said Supervisor Paul Kelley, who represents the 4th District. “We all need to be focusing on water conservation and water recycling to maximize the capacity we have now, or we’ll be in a serious, prolonged situation.”

Sonoma County Water Agency provides water supply, flood control and sanitation services for the County of Sonoma. Visit us on the Web at www.sonomacountywater.org.

- ### -